

The defence of imagination

By Samuel Hynes

heating evidence that Spenser studies have been experiencing a boom of quality as well as quantity. The questions being asked are more interesting, the standard of the answers higher, than twenty years ago, although there is still striking weighting towards Books I and II of *The Faerie Queene*, both of which have been the subject of more than half of the critical attention devoted to them. These are traditionally the more accessible books, but may not yet be the result of the amount of energy expended on them? III, IV and V, with their exploration of social and sexual issues, might seem an appeal to a more mature, sophisticated, and perhaps less likely, readership. Readers repelled by the certainties of Book I might be attracted by the ambiguities of the central books, and it is the general reader who still finds Spenser inaccessible for all the labour expended on expounding him, perhaps the most regrettable by-product of the scholar.

There are a few slips in the proofreading, and some minor omissions, including Roy Strong's catalogue for the 1967 exhibition *The Elizabethan Image and James M. Osborn's Young Philip Sidney*. The compilers have been so thorough in their inclusion of Battonaire that it seems a pity that they have missed its great collection of Spenser's letters. *The Letters of Edmund Spenser: The Virginal Queen* (Columbus: 1984).

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WORLD'S WORK

One thing his early visits to America taught Curward was pace. He was bowled over by the speed at which a seemingly simple country

well known by his *La Vieillesse* trilogy, still known by heart by several generations. Lawrence writes that he "reads astonishingly well. It gets thicker in print and has bones and muscles. . . . For fun, I tried to strike redundant words out of your book. Only a few were none. That's what I felt when I told you it was superb prose."

It may still be fashionable to dismiss *Cavalcade* as a banker's ramp or establishmentarian chatterbox. I agree with the excellent Irish actress, Aileen, who stopped me on the stairs of the Hotel de Ville, but I loathe it. I loathe it.

The *Chronique Francaise*, in 1936 of *Journal de la Vieillesse*, and the *Journal de Noel* with a well-deserved *honorary* mention, was already welcome in several wardrooms of the Fleet, having, as it were, blown his flag in a number of the most important positions, chiefly through the agency of the famous Diddle Mouthpiece, the *Times* critic, strange that it is Vainie, then Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean, whom then Admiral Sir Dudley Pound and his wife should have given Noel as *Daddy*. On the rose cart blanche to an oak restaurant they liked to do an official reception on board the flagship, *Ara*, the *Amant*. "Lady Castlerose said, 'Noel, I've a wonderful feeling that I shall be the last lady to see you here.' Noel said, 'I shall be the last to see you here.'"

[illegible]

could have been entered "All
everything you ever wanted to
about Noel Coward but never
whom to ask." Even if that
there may be more, and I
to hear, everybody who ever
our mind anything he wrote
composed with read it with
If not a masterpiece, it is a
terly and surely definitive
together of Cowards life and
full of splendid, funny anec-
And the misadventures which
can scarcely be overestimated
author. All the same, I doubt
the Master could say as
he did of the law book he
reading, "they better be such
that," Mr. English "have done
fort" "and I have done them
Baker" come from, like possi-
tion, must have been paid
out from Swifty Lane, the
of the "Landscape" and work
of the "Landscape" and work
the Links. Misspellings and
clams abound and there are
signs of carelessness uncharac-
teristic of the usually meticulous
Lasley. The untimely death
Niven is even mentioned, but
the wrong wife (Rah Butler of
colossal memory Eden in the
excellent memoirs) and No-
made to read Vowell's "The
Flowers long before the illu-
tion and publications of "The
the book is a wonderful treat
a wonderful study of men added
a wonderful study of nations and
God Cole Lasley has through-
us poor heterosexuals have
English word gay back, but
from all camp consciousness
Noel himself would have be-
satisfied. It is also a very
and stands of the same
and noble men who found
the Master has found it

Stephen Roskill's explanation of the eight-year gap between the publication of the two volumes is this definitive work, *Naval Policy between the Wars*, affords a fascinating glimpse into the tangled story of the accessibility of the British public records to scholars. The first volume was completed under the clause of the 1958 Act which allowed exceptions to the prevailing fifty-year rule, provided the documents concerned had no bearing on official scrutiny. This, Captain Roskill assures us, involved consultations or amendments. When set to work on the second volume he discovered that the documents he had not reached the Public Record Office from the originating departments. Knowning the difficulties this would involve him in he decided to concentrate on his biography of the Duke of Devonshire, already published in 1973. By then he had already made liberal use of the public records, and he had found that exceptions imposed on the thirty-year barred access to documents with the force of a law. He had written the first volume. The Navy Department fortunately agreed to open a number of these closed papers and so the two volumes were "more or less in line." Even then he found that sources of intelligence files were still closed to him, that other important documents had been destroyed, and that his "weeding" was thoughtless.

Despite these difficulties, Roskill shows all the mastery of critical material, the clarity of exposition, the incisiveness of his scholarship which his previous work has led readers to expect. The Royal Navy has produced many competent biographers, historians from its ranks. Captain Roskill's achievement is to have written the classic, authoritative history of the Navy, the *Naval Policy between the Wars*. The *Less Known*, lectures on the *Struggle of Sea Power*, his *Ham-*

By D. C. Watt

[illegible]

great battle, but not enlightenment about the roles envisaged for a craft in those latter-day Jutlands. And, most surprising of all, the navy's thoughts on the most agonising British strategic dilemma of the time. Could Germany be defeated without a resort to full-scale continental war?

In addition to his main theme, Captain Roskill includes chapters on the Invergordon Mutiny and the role of the navy in the Spanish Civil War. The book is written in a reliable account of the episode is published and is made the starting point for a thoughtful examination of subsequent policies to improve the position of the officer corps.

As far as the politicians of the period are concerned, Captain Roskill expressly rejects the "Gulag" Menzies thesis. It is not so, he judges, that the navy's leaders under several of whom he served. Over-simplifying, Churchill, even as a hero, Frederick Dreyer as a traitor, and Dudley Pound as a man with many good qualities but unimpaired by his political inferiority and lack of imagination, were the first three years of the coming war. Although he does not explicitly judge the politicians, Roskill's selection of quotations is sometimes disastrous. Sir Alexander Henderson's "Memorandum on Sea Power sent to Chamberlain in 1939" is a splendid how vain is the rhetoric the Japsen will send a fleet and are to conquer Singapore. . . . One take it as quite certain that Japan would not, for naval reasons, be able to make such magnificent conquests as the professional errors of Britain's naval leaders can be so much clearer perspective.

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It would be a pity if the review were to be the case. For the *Journal*, in Mr. Middlebrook's attempt to be fair to the rank and file on both sides in the Second World War, that his readers may eventually look at this as near an example of history can provide of the "Judean War" and had the G-bomb triumphed, both Mr. Middlebrook and his British readers would have been very poor chaps for exercising their judiciousness on the issue raised by the history of Congress 122 and HX 223, or indeed of any other.

By Brian Ranft

Stephen Roskill's explanation of the eight-year gap between the publication of the two volumes of this definitive work, *Naval Policy between the Wars*, affords a fascinating glimpse into the administrative and the accessibility of the British public records to scholars. The first volume was completed under the clause of the 1958 Act which allowed exceptions to the prevailing fifty-year rule, provided, that the documents had not been put to official scrutiny. This, Captain Roskill assures us, involved no deletions or amendments. When he set to work on the second volume he discovered that the documents he after he had not reached the Public Record Office from their originating departments. Knowing the difficulties this would involve him in, he decided to concentrate on his biography for the next three years. But then, in 1965, an opportunity that he found that exceptions could be imposed on the thirty-year rule, barred access to documents which had been put to official scrutiny in the first volume. The Navy Department fortunately agreed to open a large number of these closes areas to him and so the two volumes are "more or less in line". Even this, however, was not the end of the matter, for the some of the information that he had closed his index to, that other important documentary had been destroyed, doubtless "weeding". Despite these difficulties, his work shows all the mastery of command of material, the clarity of exposition, and the impeccable scholarship which his previous work has led readers to expect. The Royal Navy has produced many competent biographers and historians from its ranks but none of Roskill's achievement. This massive four-volume history of the Royal Navy, of which the first volume is now published, is a masterpiece. It is a work of the highest quality, and it is a pleasure to see it published. The first volume is a work of the highest quality, and it is a pleasure to see it published. The first volume is a work of the highest quality, and it is a pleasure to see it published.

"The Period of Reluctant Rarmament", admirably summarized his theme. It was a reluctance based in its earlier years on the Anglo-American determination to work for a drastic reduction of naval armaments. Later it developed, as far as Britain was concerned (after the failure of the London Naval Conference of 1935) marked the end of the era of naval limitations begun at Washington in 1922. It was a period when financial and industrial resources were inadequate to supply the forces which the threatening international scene demanded. Another equally valid interpretation would be to describe the period as one in which Britain could not begin to prepare for her world role, which her economic resources were incapable of sustaining. This contradiction became painfully obvious to the navy as it tried to solve the problem of maintaining the government's policy of maintaining the Dominions to send a major fleet to the Far East in the event of Japanese attack and yet at the same time to have adequate strength in home waters against a Mackdonaldian attack.

The problem was, in fact, a very real one. It was the lack of unity (just as the internal cohesion of the British Empire could be maintained only by the consent of its subjects and not by force, so the security from external attack could only be maintained by the consent of its subjects) which threatened the major opponents in Europe and Asia.

The disarmament conferences and other aspects of international relations affecting naval policy, as well as the economic problems which have the long interval in publication has been a disadvantage.

The appearance of collections of official documents and many competent secondary works have made the depressing territory only too familiar. Mr. H. H. Munroe's parallel treatment given to American naval policy as it moved from the clamour for parity with Britain to the more rational attempt to find ways to meet the needs of the Japanese and the European great powers is valuable though Captain Roskill's exposition of these topics is, it could be

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